

CYCLICAL MENTORSHIP IN ARTS EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

Insights from Emerging and Veteran Leaders



A CONVERSATION BETWEEN

QUANICE FLOYD AND ROBYNE WALKER MURPHY



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ABOUT & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

About Americans for the Arts

The mission of Americans for the Arts is to serve, advance, and lead the network of organizations and individuals who cultivate, promote, sustain, and support the arts in America.

Founded in 1960, Americans for the Arts is the nation's leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts and arts education. From offices in Washington, DC and New York City, we provide a rich array of programs that meet the needs of more than 150,000 members and stakeholders. We are dedicated to representing and serving local communities and to creating opportunities for every American to participate in and appreciate all forms of the arts.

About the Arts Education Program

The Arts Education Program provides leadership development, networking, research, and tools that empower individuals and organizations to create equitable systems and strong policies which strengthen the arts education ecosystem. We seek to unify diverse stakeholders, including arts education professionals, cultural and education sector leaders, the business community, parents, and young people, to create change in their communities, states, and the nation.

About the Emerging Leaders Program

The Emerging Leaders Program identifies and cultivates the next generation of arts leaders in America. Through professional development and peer networking opportunities on the national and local levels, members contribute their enthusiasm, creativity, and potential to strengthening the arts in America and building the next generation of arts leaders.

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INTRODUCTION

Arts education programs nationally are challenged to serve an ever-diversifying student population. As trends in the field of arts education are maturing to reflect demographic shifts, leaders of these programs must facilitate meaningful and comprehensive succession planning to prepare the next generation of leaders in this important sector.

Unfortunately, while established and robust arts learning programs emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, **leadership in the field still does not adequately reflect youth served or communities in which the programs operate.** The challenges faced by these organizations could be aided by leveraging the strategies employed throughout the field of arts administration to diversify and broaden the leadership pipeline, empowering future leaders while simultaneously honoring and harnessing the great work of current leadership. These strategies can and should be explored to promote intergenerational dialogue and cyclical mentorship among arts education leaders.

RESEARCH APPROACH

As the population of students served continues to change and grow in their challenges, needs, and demography, research shows that national organizations—such as Americans for the Arts—have a responsibility to broaden the leadership pipeline and build future leaders through intergenerational dialogue. A community-based participatory approach to research should be taken to connect youth, emerging and mid-career leaders (adults), and veterans (adult elders) to leverage effective strategies to honor community differences and develop sustainable missions. Among others, the higher education and nonprofit sectors have led strategic investments in capacity building of multi-generational teams for purposes of fostering dialogue to engage the next generation of leaders in a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable way.

In 2017, Americans for the Arts conducted research to illuminate effective practices of emerging and seasoned leaders in the field of arts education. The research was intended to inform the development of programming to assist in cyclical mentorship, intergenerational dialogue, and to support the broadening and diversifying of the pool of new leaders in the arts education field.

Research was led by emerging leaders and supported by mid-career and veteran staff and was deployed in a community-based, participatory manner. Researchers used a form of simultaneous storytelling and data gathering with participants to gather perspectives and generate authentic discussion. The following documented interviews are transcripts of the dialogues.

“You will be the very best at what you do when you build relationships one at a time”

Jean Tokuda Irwin,
Arts Education Program Manager,
Utah Division of Arts & Museums

FINDINGS

The overall findings from the research were grouped in several categories ranging from transformative moments in leaders' own development to suggestions for tackling systemic barriers to equitable leadership development.

Participants shared anecdotes about their times of growth and moments of challenge as leaders in the arts education field. For some, this moment of success was with an effective mentor and for others it was overcoming a systemic barrier challenging their race or socio-economic status.

All participants felt that systemic barriers impede the development of diverse leaders in the pipeline. They offered solutions such as shifts in the culture of internships, payment structures, certifications or inclusion of alternative qualifications, and changing certain aspects of the culture of arts or educational leadership.

Additionally, participants believed in the power to grow and change as emerging, mid-career, or veteran leaders through professional learning and leadership skill development. Suggestions included: building stronger relationships among broad swaths of individuals, engaging in inquiry-based research and management, developing a more 'facilitated' leadership style, and mobilizing your own practice as a student of your surroundings.

In a session held at the 2017 Americans for the Arts' Annual Conference, the topic of **'cyclical mentorship'** was proposed for consideration in a participatory session discussing the future of arts education leadership. This proposed cycle of mentorship begins as young people are mentored by adult arts educators, emerging leaders are mentored by both elders and youth, and elders are mentored by both emerging leaders and youth. This concept engages the broad concepts of intergenerational dialogue and artistic skill development to engage each other in shared learning and to have shared responsibility for the future of our field by way of the pipeline built to enhance leadership.

The following case study will highlight perspectives on these broad themes and is intended to inform and inspire emerging, mid-career, and veteran leaders to engage in this work.



Emerging Leader in Arts Education

QUANICE G. FLOYD

FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR, ARTS ADMINISTRATORS OF COLOR NETWORK

Quanice G. Floyd is a renaissance woman who wears many capes. Born and raised in NYC, she has spent over a decade in Washington, DC where she has received her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Music Education from Howard University and Kent State University respectively. Her passion for arts administration led her to pursue her second Master's degree in Arts Management at American University and is currently a doctoral student at Drexel University. Quanice is a public-school music educator where she teaches elementary school general music, chorus, band, and orchestra. She is also the Founder & Director of the Arts Administrators of Color Network, an organization committed to empowering artists and arts administrators by advocating for access, diversity, inclusion, and

equity in the arts in the DC and Baltimore metropolitan areas. Quanice also serves as a board member for two DC arts organizations, and is an alumna of the ArtEquity Facilitator Cohort, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra's Music Educators Academy, Arts Administrators Academy, 4pt0 Schools Essentials Program, and the Arts Education Collaborative's Leadership Academy. She is working endlessly towards her goals of becoming an arts education expert and advocate by providing a quality education to DC's at-risk student populations by establishing and leading a school dedicated to the arts.



Veteran Leader in Arts Education

ROBYNE WALKER-MURPHY

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GROUNDSWELL

Robyne is a nationally recognized art and social justice educator and administrator. In November, she began her appointment as Executive Director at Groundswell, New York City's premier organization dedicated to advancing the practice of public artmaking. Previous to her position at Groundswell, Robyne served as director of membership development and engagement at the National Guild for Community Arts Education, working closely with a national network of community arts organizations. Robyne created the Guild's first network for leaders of color in the arts, ALAANA (African, Latin, Asian, Arabic, Native American) to raise the profile of work being led by people of color (POC) in the arts, increase POC access to sustained resources, and invest in the growth and leadership of people

of color in the field of community arts education. This role was deeply rooted in her work serving for seven years as the director of the DreamYard Art Center, located on the ground floor of an affordable housing unit in the Morrisania section of the Bronx. Under her leadership, DreamYard Art Center's offerings expanded from three programs serving high school students to 16 multi-disciplinary art and college readiness programs for young people in grades PreK-12. In 2012, DreamYard Art Center was recognized by the White House as one of the top 12 out of school programs in the nation. Robyne accepted the award from First Lady Michelle Obama at a White House ceremony. During her tenure at DreamYard, Robyne also led the organization through the development of several arts and social justice programming and community engagement initiatives. She created and co-developed DreamYard's Social Justice Pedagogy Team, a professional development series aimed at establishing important tenets of social justice education; creating common language across programs; exploring best practices; and learning from veteran social justice educators Robyne has conducted workshops about art and social justice at conferences and institutions across the country including: New York University, City College, the Bronx Museum of Art, Carnegie Hall, and the National Guild's Conference for Community Arts Education (Chicago/Los Angeles). Her writing on social justice education has been featured in Teachers and Writers and Teaching Artist Guild magazines. Robyne is a graduate of Clark Atlanta University where she majored in English with an emphasis in African American Literature. She has delivered keynote addresses on liberatory education at the University of Chicago, Seattle Museum of Art and Harvard Graduate School of Education (November 2017). Robyne obtained her MFA in acting from the University of Washington's Professional Actor Training Program. She resides in Brooklyn, New York with her husband, Tarik Murphy and her son, Ras.

Q: Please reflect on a transformative moment for you as an arts education leader from a mentor or mentee.



QUANICE: I would say a transformative moment for me would be going into the public education sector and being a music teacher and being paired with a senior teacher. I would never forget, her name is Ms. Evans, she's retired now. She was teaching for probably about 25 years when I was first paired with her. One thing that Ms. Evans said was as someone who works in the public school and has seen the bottoms of the education world to the top of the education world, she always told me "always apologize later on" and I didn't understand that at the time. So, basically, she's got what she knows is right for the kids and she doesn't care what anyone else thinks about it. And so when someone comes back to her about something, like a supervisor, she'll apologize for it later but she always knows that she's done the right thing. And so I took that advice and have kind of used that as my (I don't know how to explain it), my model of teaching and my model of anything that I do so I want to make sure that I'm following my own morals, my own light, what I think is right for the sake of the greater community and if people disagree with me—I'm just going to have to apologize later because this is what I feel is right for the community that I'm working for.



ROBYNE: A transformative experience as a mentor? It's such an elder-like response because I've been doing this work for a little bit and I've been able to start off as a teaching artist then moved into being like an administrator and now, of course, working as an executive director. And when I was a teaching artist, I started being a teaching artist fully back in 2004, at the Dream Yard Project, as a substitute teacher actually, and then the class that I started teaching/subbing with was a class of sixth graders—so they were like 11, 12 years old when I was working with them. I formed a special bond with a few of the young women in that group and we had an after-school group together and so in 2004, even when I transitioned out and started working in the administrative side at Dream Yard, there was a middle-school to high-school program called The Action Project that I was able to recruit them for. So, even in the role of being a teacher in some of their other programs, I was able to work with them still all the way up until they graduated. That was a very powerful experience for me, to be able to work with women when they were 11-12 years old and then to be able to watch them graduate and then also to have two of them actually go off to college and then return and they're now program coordinators and program managers at the Dream Yard Project; so that, to me, is probably the most powerful experience to have worked with young women in that classroom setting and then have been able to see their journey through all the way through high school, then going into college, and then just be able to follow them as they are working in the programs that I helped to start at Dream Yard. Being able to take them to a whole different level—like putting their own spin on it so I really feel very blessed to have been a part of that process and I learned so much just from working with them and learned so much

about youth development work and social justice work through that experience. I understand now why it's so important to be able to create and develop programs that have built into them the opportunity for students to work with you over a long period of time.

Q: Are there systemic barriers to leadership within the field of arts education? What is one suggestion on how we might tackle it?



QUANICE: Yeah, uh, there are. There are definitely systemic barriers to it, only because I think—to me, arts education starts at birth and it ends at death. And not having the access in certain areas, socioeconomic areas, or neighborhoods, or communities—not having that access is the beginning of creating the barrier. So, I think what a lot of my work is focused on is working with students who are living in low socioeconomic communities, students of color. I think that a suggestion that might tackle it, is to make sure that arts education is open and accessible for everyone, for all. Because if students don't understand it, if they don't have access to it. If they don't have the resources for it, they're not going to know what it is.

So, I think access is very important to me when it comes to my work and that's why I created my organization, the Arts Administrators of Color, because I think even in the arts management field in general, there's a lack of diversity. So, I'm trying to break these barriers by creating my own programs—I created a mentor program for emerging arts leaders and pair them up with a mid-level or executive-level leader who happens to be a person of color and try to create an action plan for them to grow and to become better leaders and establish a pipeline. So, I guess, that kind of goes into your next question so yeah, there are systemic barriers and there are racial barriers. There's socioeconomic barriers, I guess it's all across the board—inside and outside of arts education.



ROBYNE: I don't need to add anything to what Quanice said because I think that Quanice covered that aspect of it: In terms of the socioeconomic and racial barriers that exist and why there's not access to formalized arts education in schools that have a lot of young people of color, so I think that was an amazing answer and I don't think I can add to it.

The only point I'm going to talk about a different aspect of that work is that we do have teachers that talk about arts education in communities of color, communities of color that happen to be from a lower socioeconomic zip code—a lot of those teachers are white teachers. And then there is this very clear definition of what they think art is and there's not ever really an understanding that—I'm speaking as a black woman, as a black person, from a culture that is very creative, that's all they do, that what we do is create, and make a dollar out of 15 cents. I always use the example: I live in New York City and we see young black children on the train every day and they're dancing and they're flipping and they're defying gravity and they're showing a very

advanced interspatial relationship. They're practicing somewhere, they're practicing their craft, they're giving each other peer-to-peer feedback like that's just in our DNA, it's in our genes.

Unfortunately, when people come in and say, "this is art and this is not art", that's part of the problem. Arts education becomes a very formalized way of looking at it instead of seeing the different ways in which these young people are being immensely creative all the time—in terms of even being here in New York City and seeing the sharing of the most influential culture that's here right now—hip-hop culture and that was born here in the Bronx. Right? So, I think that as arts educators, there's this sense of like we have to make young people appreciate the arts. They need to be very specific—specific about what art you're talking about because young people have an appreciation of the arts—they may not appreciate the art YOU bring in here—be specific about that. But don't say that there's not art appreciation because what you're really saying is "we don't appreciate your art and we're gonna come and tell you what art is because we don't believe that what you're doing is art."



QUANICE: And that goes into equity, too. because when you're dealing with young people of color, working in communities of color, they're not leading the kids where they are, they're not trying to bridge that gap. So as a public school teacher, I've noticed that a lot where you have these teachers who are teaching Code I, which is a musical thing and the kids are not relating to that. Miss Floyd can come in and she can talk about Africa and how drum circles meant community and the kids, they latch onto it. So yeah, a lot of people are not bridging the gap when it comes to the arts and they're trying to define what the arts are supposed to be when art can really be anything.



ROBYNE: Right, and their attitudes coming into these communities, doing these communities a favor by being present. As if they're going to give these communities some type of culture—it's a white savior complex. That's a lot of what we're seeing and that needs to be challenged. So, when I talk to teachers, I talk to them about challenging the white savior complex that they can sometimes bring in the room...and even taking out the 'white' part in terms of coming from a different economic background: the savior complex. Like, how do you go into a space working with young people and start to see that the student is a teacher and the teacher is a student? In both ways, it goes—instead of like "oh these children, they don't have something, they are deficient in something, and I'm going to come and bestow upon them all the beautiful arts education so they can become more civilized." And so there's this work that teachers need to do and educators need to do that's really about examining their own issues when it comes to racism and things of that sort and how they're bringing that into the space.

Q: What is the virtue of broadening the leadership pipeline for the field of arts education?



QUANICE: I would really like to commend grassroots organizations whose focus is on arts education because I see them on the ground, roots on the ground, going into the communities, making sure that the students are getting the education that they need, making sure that students are getting culturally relevant arts education. There are so many small grassroots organizations that I think are doing amazing work and I think because of them going into the schools or going into the communities and doing this work, they're providing that access which I think can help create future leaders in the arts.



ROBYNE: This question, like “what is the virtue of broadening the leadership pipeline for the field of arts education?”—this is a problematic question to be honest. The fact that someone's even asking that is coming from a place of privilege. Like, it's these kinds of questions that are very frustrating, to be honest with you. It just reminds me of this whole conversation around diversity and inclusion, where people who have power, mostly white people, are feeling like they're doing somebody a favor by putting a few people at the table—so this question is problematic—“what's the virtue of expanding the leadership pipeline for arts education?” There's no virtue to it.

You just need to be doing it. The fact that it's even phrased that way is problematic and I think Americans for the Arts needs to think about why they wanted to put the question in that way. The way this question is phrased is part of the problem because that's the thinking around the question as opposed to thinking of it like, “this is how it should be.” You're not being virtuous, that's just the right thing to do. If you really want to educate people, if you want to do the right thing, if you want to educate people well, and you want to educate yourself—that's the thing, there's this idea of diversity and inclusion—it's this arrow that's pointing out and not pointing in—organizations need to look within themselves and figure out why we would even want to ask the question in this way.



QUANICE: You know, I didn't even think about it that way—that makes a lot of sense.



ROBYNE: You know I say that because, there becomes a lot of conversations around diversity and inclusion that I get very, very, bored with because no one's really asking the question that's underneath it. You know what I mean? It's like you're doing someone a favor by not being racist, or you're doing somebody a favor by, you know, stepping back in terms of power and you're thinking about who should really be in this field—who else should be? You're not doing anybody a favor. And so that's where it comes from for me because I've been a part of these conversations for a while. And so I'm just so done with these types of questions. I'm just done with it.

Q: What types of skills do you feel have a long-lasting impact on the development of leadership in your work?



QUANICE: I don't think you can put that into a box. There's not anything specific you can find in someone that says that you are or are not a leader. I think you have to cultivate people, of course, but when it comes to being a leader—that's something that's within people. Like you can't just say, "oh, this person's really good at event planning, so they're a good leader" or "they're organized and that's a good leader". You can't really put them into that box. Leaders can look like anything, they can say anything, there's different definitions for a leader. For some people, Donald Trump is a leader. For some people, Barack Obama is a leader. So, I don't think you can really define what a leader is, just in general.



ROBYNE: I like what Quatrice said. I think what I would just add to that, in terms of this pipeline, even being long-lasting, one of the things that I would like to see is more leaders do this work in more of, like, a facilitated leadership style. This is where they're not thinking that it's top-down; where it's like "okay I'm the executive director and I'm gonna tell all of you what to do" because that's not how you grow new leaders. I think that my leadership style might even be a little frustrating to other people because when people ask me a question like "what are we going to do?" I look right back at them and ask, "well what are we going to do?"

Part of my role is to also help people come up with creative solutions because I want to be able to step away and know that the next group of leaders is ready to go. In too many organizations, people are still looking up at a person to tell them what to do because that's how people have interpreted leadership, as opposed to, when you're a leader for someone—one of your main goals is to think about how you're developing people around you. So you can ask clarifying question or critical questions and be much more inquiry-based when everyone's looking for "the answer" but if we have really good questions, there could be multiple answers. So, I would say just being more inquiry based and also using to a more facilitated leadership style...but, even then, I totally agree with Quatrice because there's so many different ways that leadership can look.

But also I feel like, in order for us to see the next generation (because eventually the older generation like me has to step aside and be able to let the next generation come up) and do what Quatrice is doing in her mentorship program which is very thoughtfully—I mean Quatrice's program, which if you don't know about, you should definitely be getting more information on, and writing about THAT—because I think that Quatrice's program is so thoughtfully put together and it is the example of like a solution for how to develop the next set of emerging leaders.

Q: Do you see differences in leadership development for in-school or community-based programs?



QUANICE: I think I'm mostly in-school so Robyne, I might have to hand that one over to you.



ROBYNE: Alright, you threw it—I'll catch it. I think in terms of working in an in-school setting, you're working in whatever school that you're in and what their core values are and what their systems are and so you're working within that system and sometimes you may have the ability to think about how you can subvert what's happening in there but for the most part, it's like when you're going into a school, you're working with a school, there's a very strong way in which you're working.

In terms of like working in a community-based program, I felt like what we were able to do when opening up our own arts center is, first of all, the relationship that you have with the students is different. So in a community-based program, you're kind of always on when working with young people in that setting in the way in which I like to see people work. You're thinking about what they need in terms of arts education—so for us, we're also a social justice program so we're also thinking about the campaigns that we're running and how we're talking to young people about what's happening in the world and how the art is in response to it. Then at the same time, we're also noticing this young person who seems like they may have some food insecurities, or what this group of young people needs to start thinking about in terms of going to college and how we have college preparatory programs or this young person may have some housing issues, and so it starts to get more into a holistic approach to dealing with the young people and then also dealing with who they're connected to.

So, what about the relationship with their parents? The parents or their families?—like I say—because it's not always a mom or a dad, it's an uncle or an aunt, or two moms, or two dads, or there's a grandmother who's raising you or whomever. So then, it's also starting to get the trust of those people in their lives because then they start to see this as a hub for them and the art is this transformative tool that's being used to draw people in, for people to respond to, but it becomes a situation and an opportunity for communities to really dig in and start to really make some transformative change. So, I think that requires a different kind of skill in terms of what kind of leader you need to be. That requires a skill of like really—I think most in school and out-of-school to be done well is that you love the people that you're working with.

I say the word “love” very outwardly and very intentionally. If you don't love young people then I don't want to work with you because that's where I'm coming from. Especially coming as a social justice educator because I want to be free and I do this work because I want to be free and I'm very clear on if I'm not free unless everyone is free. We're coming from...our stake in this is we're saying that working in this way will help us bring about freedom. And we believe that arts education will be one of the ways that we can get to that. And, so, I need someone who is thinking

in that sense, who's thinking about having a long-term relationship with young people, and is able to design programs that involve the arts, and also are thinking about the social/emotional needs of a young person and can pick up the phone sometimes and take a call for a mother that's looking for their child at two o'clock in the morning and community arts are sometimes just sitting at a Quinceañera one day and sitting at a funeral the next—I've been in both situations. And, so, that is a different type of skill set. That doesn't happen in school, it depends on if you're a push-in teacher or if you just have a residency there but when you have a community-based program, I think it calls on a different set of expectations from the community and that you should have of yourselves in order to be in the community in a way that's really substantial.



QUANICE: Right, and I think public schools are moving towards that because I feel like, they were doing that at one point in time and then something just dropped—I don't know what happened but I think they're trying to get back to that holistic approach of teaching to the whole child, to knowing the community, to loving the community, to being a part of the community, and that's why a lot of these community schools are popping up because they want to make sure they're not just educating the students but being advocates for the community.

Q: Do you have advice for future leaders in the field of arts education? What is your hope for the future of leadership in arts education?



QUANICE: The first thing that I thought of when I saw this question was “don't ever underestimate your power” so with that, especially being a black woman and coming into this majority—I hate using that word—majority old white men field. There are a lot of people out there that will tell you that you can't do something because of who you are—physically who you are. And I feel like for future leaders, future leaders of arts education are going to start looking like what the world looks like and is going to be very inclusive and very diverse and very equitable. So I just want to let them know that they are powerful and don't let anybody else tell them otherwise. And, I guess, my hope for the future of leadership in arts education is to continue pushing back against the status quo.



ROBYNE: That's good. Yeah, I guess my advice is to do what Quanice is doing. If there are spaces that are not there, then to make the space. Don't wait for someone to make the space for you that doesn't currently exist. So, how are we, as people of color, or as people from marginalized communities, not waiting always to be asked to be sitting at that table but we're creating our own tables. I want to see us create our own tables because what we see when we create our own tables, the people who didn't want us to be at their tables, will try to come over to our table anyway. So I want to like, make the table like Quanice is doing because what happens is, these highly-respected arts organizations do their work and then there is this trend that becomes

like social justice trend or a diversity/inclusion trend and they get on that trend and they co-op that trend and then when they're done with that trend, they drop that trend. But you know, social justice work and anti-racism work and anti-oppression work and pro-liberation work is my life and it's the life of a lot of us because we're really working for something that's beyond the arts. We really believe that the arts will help us get to this place where people will be more free and liberated and we know that there's a lot of work to do and so I want to see people do what Quance is doing and think, "you know what? This system that didn't exist, I'm just going to make it" and then what's going to happen is—you already see what happens is—a Americans for the Arts is calling Quance, you know what I mean? So this is what it needs to be.

Washington, DC

Americans for the Arts
1000 Vermont Ave NW
6th Floor
Washington, DC 20005
202.371.2830

New York City

Americans for the Arts
One East 53rd Street
2nd Floor
New York, NY 10022
212.223.2787

www.AmericansForTheArts.org



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